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THE GOSPELS AND CONTEMPORARY BIOGRAPHIES

CLYDE WEBER VOTAW
University of Chicago

The Gospels of the New Testament were written in a period of enormous literary production. The Mediterranean world from about 400 B.C. to 100 A.D. (and beyond) created the greatest literature that the world up to that time had known—greatest in quality and greatest in quantity. Also, since that time this ancient literature has remained pre-eminent, until the rise of the modern literature of the last three centuries. The writings of the ancient period were: first, Greek; second, Roman; third, oriental (Jewish). They embodied history, philosophy, politics, ethics, religion, science, medicine, law, tragedy, comedy, poetry, rhetoric, oratory, and education. Our Bible is of course oriental; the books comprised in it were the finest moral-religious writings of the Palestinian Jews and primitive Christians. Jewish literature was limited in variety and amount; it was chiefly moral-religious, and was choice rather than extensive. The Greek and Roman literature was incalculably vast. Even the fraction of it which has survived to the present day makes of itself a great library. The extant writings of Plato alone are more extensive than the whole Bible. The same is true of the writings of Xenophon, of Aristotle, of Demosthenes, of Cicero, of Livy, of Plutarch and many others. It is also true of Philo and Josephus, who although they were Jews produced literature under the Greek influence and in Greek proportions.

In comparison with these elaborate literary productions of the Greeks and Romans, the Gospels were brief, special and popular writings. In extent a Gospel was about the length of a chapter in the large histories, or of an essay in the ethical writings, or of a play in the tragedies. In character it was a religious tract, intended to promote the Christian movement. In style it represented the

popular spoken language of the common people, for the author was not a trained philosopher or a professional littérateur. The Evangelists produced their books for the simple, practical purpose of preaching the gospel to the Mediterranean world. They were writings of the people, by the people, and for the people. They took on the characteristics which belonged to the Christian missionaries in their work. Their length, content, and style were such as to make them efficient propagandist media among the masses of the Empire who were in the main uneducated, poor, and obscure.

The story of Jesus was Jewish and Palestinian in origin. It arose among an Aramaic-speaking people and circulated in that language. But within the first thirty years (that is, by 60 A.D.) the Gentiles had shown greater interest in the gospel message than the Jews, and the Christian mission was chiefly successful in Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy. The Gospels arose, not in Palestine, but in these gentile countries. Their authors, with the possible exception of Luke, were Jews who had become Christians; but, instead of the narrow Jewish attitude toward non-Jews, they had given themselves to a mission among and primarily for the Gentiles. The Gospels therefore were written outside of Palestine, in the Greek language, for the gentile peoples. They told the Jewish story of Jesus, the Jewish founder of Christianity; but they told it in the universal language of the Empire, with a selected and adapted content, and with a universal color and objective.

The Gospels were not intended to be a contribution to historical or philosophical literature. They presented a religious belief and a moral ideal, which they sought to spread. That this message was put into writing was incidental and supplementary to the oral mission, for the Christian propaganda was mainly by word of mouth. The Gospels, however, proved increasingly attractive and useful as a means of evangelization; especially was this the case when the great missionaries of the first century passed away and smaller men succeeded to their duties. That striking, effective invasion of Southern Europe by oriental religion and morality in the centuries to which the rise of Christianity belongs was essentially promoted by the Gospel writings, in their rudimentary

and in their finished forms. The Jewish morality-religion, in the revision of Christianity, which caught so strongly and spread so rapidly in the Greco-Roman world that in two hundred years it achieved recognition as the state religion of the Empire, was not a new philosophy nor a new ethics destined to refute and overthrow the best gentile thought and purpose. Rather, it was a vital, popular hope, ideal and appeal which gradually fused with the Greco-Roman philosophy and ethics to make the highest religion of history. The Gospels are to be viewed, not as historical writings produced by a historical impulse and method, but as propagandist writings of this early Christian movement. They contain historical reminiscences, or memorabilia, of Jesus' ministry; but for the practical use these may serve in the evangelistic mission.

The authors of the Gospels took up into their works the events, deeds, and words of Jesus quite as the homiletical transmission of the first generation and the second generation handed them down. At no stage in the transmission of the memorabilia of Jesus, from the time of the ministry itself (28-30 A.D.) to the time when the latest of the Gospels was produced (the Gospel of John, *ca.* 110-125 A.D.) do the memorabilia appear to have been subjected to thorough, careful historical investigation and criticism for the recovery of the exact facts about Jesus. Nor does there appear to have been any disposition to view, estimate, or relate Jesus historically; the primitive Christian interest was religious and practical, concerned not with past facts as such but with present values and potencies. Jesus was to them a divine Redeemer more than a man of history; the memorabilia of his deeds and teachings were the message of an ardent faith more than the chronicles of past events. The Evangelists certainly did not intend to picture the life of Jesus inaccurately or inadequately. But neither can it be said of them that they had the impulse, the ability, the training, or the resources for determining the exact facts of Jesus' ministry—facts which belonged to a period forty to eighty years antecedent to the composition of their books and of which there had been only an informal, unsystematic, popular, and homiletical transmission. Luke's prologue does indeed speak of investigation and an improved order, but Luke's Gospel does not in fact present

an account of Jesus that is on the whole more historical than the accounts given by Mark and Matthew. Luke's framework of the ministry is taken over from Mark. He has incorporated nearly all the Markan material, and he gives these narratives in a form not more exactly historical than Mark's. The non-Markan material which Luke has in common with Matthew may be in some passages and features more exactly historical as given by Luke, but in the main Matthew retains more of the original content, form, and color of the Gospel memorabilia. The material which Luke alone presents, both that which is scattered through the sections paralleled by Mark and Matthew and that which is massed in the middle third of his Gospel, does not particularly indicate superior historical investigation or arrangement. As sources of historical information about Jesus, the Gospels of Mark and Matthew are primary in a larger measure than is the Gospel of Luke. The Lukan material is mainly secondary in the sense that it represents a stage of greater modification of the memorabilia in the process of selecting, expanding, and adapting the story of Jesus to the practical needs of the Christian mission toward the end of the first century A.D.

One may say that the Gospels are writings from which historical facts about Jesus may be learned, rather than that they are historical writings. These books were not called Lives of Jesus, but "Gospels" (*εὐαγγέλια*), i.e., evangelistic tracts to promote the Christian movement, to commend Jesus as Christ, Lord, Savior, and Teacher to the Mediterranean world. When we approach them with the historical aim, method, and spirit, to ascertain the literal and exact facts about Jesus as a man of history, we are seeking what they in part contain but what they were not principally designed to supply. From them we can in part reconstruct the life of Jesus, but they do not furnish this ready to hand; they furnish materials to which the full process of historical investigation, criticism, and interpretation has to be applied. The Evangelists prepared their Gospels with a practical moral-religious intent; in larger and smaller aggregates they collected from current tradition, chiefly in documentary form, the memorabilia of Jesus as they were known, taught, and used in the districts where they

wrote; they selected, revised, and arranged these memorabilia in accordance with their idea of what would serve the particular needs of their mission; and they put these writings forth as a supplemental aid to the oral propaganda in which as Christian missionaries they were engaged.

The Gospels are not chronicling but dramatic productions. They present pen pictures of Jesus as a divine Person on earth, revealing God, saving men, teaching righteousness, calling to repentance, healing sickness, heralding the new age. The simple, graphic style of these descriptions, and the glory and assurance which fill the story, made the Gospels incalculably influential and precious. They aimed to make men "see Jesus," not in the literal garb of a Galilean prophet, but in the transfigured raiment of the Son of God redeeming the world.

Then are the Gospels *biographies* of Jesus? No or Yes, according to the connotation given the term "biography."

In the historical sense, a biography is a writing which aims to present all the important dates and facts about a person, with perspective and exactness, including his relation to other persons and to his times. This involves research, criticism, and interpretation, according to the current principles of history-writing. It is obvious that the Gospels are not biographies in this sense of the term.

In the popular sense, a biography is any writing which aims to make one acquainted with a historical person by giving some account of his deeds and words, sketchily chosen and arranged, even when the motive of the writer is practical and hortatory rather than historical. The amount, character, order, and accuracy of the historical information contained in these pragmatic writings vary greatly, according to the purposes, interests, abilities, and resources of the several authors. The Gospels may be classified with productions of this kind; in the popular sense they are biographies, and we commonly so think of them.

The Mediterranean world, in the ancient period to which the Gospels belonged, produced a host of biographies. Naturally the popular biographies exceeded the historical ones in number, attractiveness, and influence, as more suited to the common mind.

The lives of many great men of the ancient period were more or less specifically narrated in the historical works produced by the eminent Greek historians, Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius; by the eminent Roman historians, Livy, Tacitus, Dio Cassius; and by the Jewish historian Josephus, who wrote in Greek at Rome under the imperial patronage and according to the Greek models. But as early as the fourth century B.C. biography became differentiated from general history as the sketch of the life of a single individual. The first biography of this kind known to us is the *Evagoras* of Isocrates, written *ca.* 365 B.C. A few years later, under the influence of this, Xenophon produced his *Agesilaus*. Xenophon's *Memorabilia of Socrates*, written perhaps somewhat earlier, was less biographical in form than the *Agesilaus*. It was, however, a most important work in making known the spirit, aim, method, and teaching of Socrates. Plato's *Dialogues* were also in an essential sense biographical of Socrates. The development of this type of literature was made possible by the historical writings of Herodotus and Thucydides in the fifth century B.C.; and also by the individualism of Socrates, in and through whom personality came to fuller recognition. Plato and Euripides did much to advance interest in the individual man. "The Greek word *βίος*, life, acquired a new meaning, charged with the whole contents of a man's actions and character." The development of biographical writing went on through the ancient period, particularly under the influence of the Peripatetic school, until it attained its highest stage in the first three centuries A.D., with the *Life of Agricola* by Tacitus, the parallel *Lives* by Plutarch, the *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* by Suetonius, the *Discourses of Epictetus* by Arrian, the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* by Philostratus, and the *Lives and Opinions of the Ancient Philosophers* by Diogenes Laertius.

These Greek and Roman biographies of the ancient period, from the fourth century B.C. to the third century A.D., achieve in varying manner and measure the biographical ideal. If one compares them with modern biography-writing—for example, the volumes of the "American Statesmen" series, or the "English Men of Letters," or the "World's Epoch-Makers," or the articles

in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed.—one finds that they fall considerably short as respects aim, method, investigation, critical process, exactness, and completeness. Edmund Gosse maintains that the distinction between biography and history and the true conception of biography are modern and did not arise until the seventeenth century. But this appears to be an overstatement. The ancients did in fact write biography, and good biography, as an examination of the writings above named will show. They did not of course attain to the standard of biographical writing that has been recently developed by historical science. Particularly is it true of the ancient biographies that they seldom had a mere chronicling purpose; they were generally written to eulogize their subjects, or to affect political opinion and action, or to teach uprightness and usefulness by example. But it is also true of modern biography-writing that its aim is chiefly educational rather than merely recording, abstract, and scholastic.

The two types of biography are to be distinguished, as we have already seen, not so much by their purpose as by their method. If a writing presents a man's life with fair completeness, order, and accuracy, out of an adequate knowledge of the facts, it is a historical biography. It may at the same time have a practical purpose—eulogistic, political, social, aesthetic, or educational. On the other hand, if a writing presents only memorabilia of a man's life, disconnected incidents and sayings, without adequate chronology and connection, without showing his genetic relation to and his influence upon his times, it is a popular biography. The two classes of course shade off into each other in various ways. If the biography of a particular individual presents definite knowledge of his dates, his motives, his message, his characteristics, his personality, and his service to his period, we may classify the work as a direct contribution to history-writing. If, however, the data of the man's life are inadequately furnished by the writing, so that uncertainty exists as to the deeds, the teaching, the personality, the relationships of the man, we may classify the work as popular, because the didactic aim has operated to the neglect or the obscuration of the historical facts. Here

again it is clear that the Gospels belong to the writings of the popular class, because of the extreme difficulty of recovering the historical Jesus.

The fulness, correctness, and competency of a writer's account of another man's life must necessarily depend upon the quantity and quality of his knowledge of the man. If immediate acquaintance is not possible, the writer's knowledge of his subject must depend upon the sources of his information, written or oral. He can tell no more than he can learn, and he can tell it no more accurately than it comes to him. Moreover, the question always arises as to what ability this biographer has to comprehend and interpret that man. Biography-writing is certainly one of the most exacting of tasks; competency in knowledge and understanding, not to mention literary expression, is so difficult to acquire. No one then can think it strange that the ancient biographies fall short of satisfying the modern historical inquirer, or that the didactic purpose of some of the writers led them to accept and use without historical criticism the memorabilia that came to their hands concerning a man.

The ancient biographies were written chiefly about two classes of men: the great political leaders (warriors and statesmen) and the great intellectual leaders (philosophers and teachers). Plutarch's *Lives* present biographical sketches of famous Roman politicians like Solon, Fabius, Cato, Pompey, Caesar, Cicero; and of famous Greek politicians like Themistocles, Pericles, Alcibiades, Aristides, Demosthenes, Alexander. Suetonius narrates the lives of the first twelve Roman emperors, from Julius Caesar to Domitian. And of course the many massive histories written in the ancient period were full of the deeds of the eminent warriors and statesmen. On the other hand, the great intellectual leaders received literary monuments. In their case the biographies naturally took the form of accounts of their teaching, since their lives were in the main uneventful. The first great philosopher to be memorialized in literature was Socrates, of the fifth century B.C. Xenophon in his *Memorabilia of Socrates* gave sketches of his method and his message; while Plato in his *Dialogues* still more elaborately reproduced and interpreted Socrates' teaching.

Since both Xenophon and Plato were pupils of Socrates, their accounts of his teaching are at first-hand; and they also narrate not a little of Socrates' manner of life. Arrian, in the second century A.D., wrote out from his own verbatim notes the teaching of his great Stoic master Epictetus. Philostratus, in the third century A.D., produced from written and oral sources an extensive *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, one of the foremost philosophers of the first century A.D., giving both his deeds and his words. Diogenes Laertius, also in the third century A.D., wrote the *Lives and Opinions of the Ancient Philosophers*, containing biographical sketches of many of the eminent thinkers and teachers of Greece and Rome through the whole ancient period. The accounts of their sayings were interspersed and associated with incidents of their deeds and manner of life. Suetonius, in the second century A.D., had undertaken to write Lives of eminent grammarians, rhetoricians, and poets; but for some reason, probably the lack of biographical material, these sketches are mere fragments, averaging perhaps one page of narrative regarding each man.

These biographies of the Greek and Roman intellectual leaders were written primarily to exhibit and perpetuate their teaching. The major portion of the material is quotation of their words, and the main interest centers in their ideas. The teaching is often enlivened and made concrete by association with some event or act in the subject's life, which is recounted generally in the anecdotal form. The amount of narrative material joined with the teaching is larger or smaller, according to the picturesqueness of the philosopher or the disposition of the biographer. Arrian's work on Epictetus gives only his teaching, nothing of his acts or the incidents of his life.

At this point the transition from biography to philosophical treatise becomes easy. A great teacher might give his message orally and his followers might write it down, as was the case with Socrates, Epictetus, Apollonius, and others, including Jesus; or the teacher might himself write down his message, as was the case with Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Plutarch, Marcus Aurelius, and others, including Paul. In the former case we especially need biographers, otherwise the teachings of these philosophers could

not be known to us and their influence would fail of perpetuation. In the latter case we have the messages of the intellectual leaders directly from their own hands; so the biographer has a secondary service to render—a highly useful service, however, because the teaching is more attractive and much better understood in the setting of the whole life. The greatest value and power in the history of the last two thousand years have attached to the first-hand writings. Aside from the Bible, the writings that have received the most attention and have exerted the greatest influence during this period have been the *Dialogues* of Plato and the philosophical treatises of Aristotle. Next to these have been the practical moral writings of Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, Epictetus (as transcribed by Arrian), and Marcus Aurelius.

In the matter of general attention and influence, the message of Jesus has been at a disadvantage as compared with the message of Paul, for the very reason that Paul wrote down his message (in part), while Jesus allowed the transmission of his teaching to fare as it might in the memories or at the hands of his followers. Among the Jews the public teachers were accustomed to do their work orally. But literature (with the exception of the Bible) received its widest and highest development among the Greeks and Romans, and the philosophical literature crowned the whole. Many of their intellectual leaders put their messages into writing—not only that, they wrote extensively and well; their compositions were great as literature not less than as philosophy. So that we have their teaching in immediate, full, and exquisite form. Had Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, and Plutarch taught only by word of mouth, their influence in the ancient, mediaeval, and modern world would have been incalculably less. Even good biographers, such as those who wrote about Socrates and Jesus, could not have reproduced their teaching in a way to make up the difference.

Among the biographical writings of the ancient Greek literature, the nearest parallels to the Gospels are the books which report the lives of Epictetus, Apollonius, and Socrates.

Epictetus lived *ca.* 50–130 A.D., and his teaching was written by Arrian *ca.* 125–150 A.D. Apollonius of Tyana lived *ca.* 10–97 A.D., and his biography was written by Philostratus *ca.* 217 A.D. Socrates

lived 469–399 B.C., and his teaching together with some incidents of his life were written by Xenophon in his *Memorabilia* and other Socratic writings *ca.* 380 B.C., and by Plato in his *Dialogues* *ca.* 380–350 B.C. It will be observed that in the case of Epictetus and Socrates, the interval between the life of the teacher and the writing of the life was brief; also, that the accounts were at first-hand, the biographers having been pupils for years of the men about whom they wrote. In the case of Apollonius, the interval between the life and Philostratus' biography was a hundred and twenty years; the biographer's knowledge of Apollonius was obtained from written and oral sources, chiefly the former.

It was the purpose of these writings to make known the personality and the message of these three great moral-religious teachers. The authors wrote with a practical, not with a chronicling intent. They did not make historical investigation, or give a systematic accurate account of the life (though the Life of Apollonius is in general chronological order, like the accounts of the Life of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels), but gave memorabilia of the teaching, with more or less incident in conjunction (the Life of Apollonius has much incident material, the writings about Socrates have but a small amount of incident, the *Discourses* of Epictetus have none). The message of each man was the thing of primary interest and value, together with the personality of the man behind his message. The events of his life, his genetic relationship to his environment, and his influence upon his times were secondary matters that received little or no attention. Therefore these lives of Epictetus, Apollonius, and Socrates, like the Gospels, are not biographies of the historical but of the popular type. They eulogize and idealize their heroes, they select their best sayings and interpret them for practical use, they give the memorabilia in an atmosphere of appreciation, they commend the message to the faith and practice of all.

Some account of these biographies of Epictetus, Apollonius, and Socrates will enable the reader to make comparison with the facts as to the origin, sources, contents, and characteristics of the New Testament Gospels.

Epictetus' biographer, Arrian (Flavius Arrianus) was a Greek historian and philosopher of Asia Minor *ca.* 96–180 A.D. He flourished in the reign of Hadrian (117–138 A.D.), who esteemed him and gave him high office. His eminent ability brought him the honor of citizenship at Athens, where he was given political position. A portion of his life was spent in Greece and Italy, but the later years were passed in Bithynia, the district of his birth. He was the author of many writings, his greatest original work being the *Anabasis* of Alexander. This contained in seven books a history of Alexander the Great from his accession to his death, and is regarded as our most complete and trustworthy account of him. Arrian in his young manhood at Rome became a pupil and friend of the distinguished Stoic philosopher and teacher Epictetus (*ca.* 50–130 A.D.). In his youth Epictetus was a slave boy at Rome. Having been given his freedom, he gained his philosophical education in that city under the eminent Stoic, Musonius Rufus, and later himself became one of the foremost Stoic teachers at Rome. But in 90 A.D., when about forty years old, Epictetus was expelled from Rome, along with the other philosophers, by the emperor Domitian, because these Stoic teachers condemned and aroused opposition to his tyranny. He withdrew to Nicopolis, in southern Epirus, where for about forty years he lived quietly and taught those who came to him, chiefly by private conversation. Epictetus did not himself put into writing any of his teaching.

But Arrian, during the years when he was studying philosophy with Epictetus, took full verbatim notes of his teaching. From these notes he later (125–150 A.D.) produced two works. The larger one was entitled '*Ἐπικτήτου Διατριβαί*' (the *Discourses of Epictetus*), and consisted of eight books, four of which are extant. The smaller work, also extant, was entitled '*Ἐγχειρίδιον*' (*Manual*), and contained in concise aphoristic form the main teachings of the *Discourses*. The neo-Platonist philosopher Simplicius, in the sixth century A.D., who wrote a valuable commentary on the *Encheiridion*, says that Arrian also wrote a Life of Epictetus telling what kind of man Epictetus was; unfortunately this has not been preserved.

Arrian, in a letter to Lucius Gellius, gives the following statement of his editorship of these books:

I neither wrote these *Discourses of Epictetus* in the way in which a man might write such things [that is, create the material out of his own mind]; nor did I make them public myself, inasmuch as I declare that I did not even write them [that is, put them into formal shape for publication]. But whatever I heard him say, the same I attempted to write down in his own words as nearly as possible, for the purpose of preserving them as memorials to myself afterwards of the thoughts and the freedom of speech of Epictetus. Accordingly, the *Discourses* are naturally such as a man would address without preparation to another, not such as a man would write with the view of others reading them. Now, being such, I do not know how they fell into the hands of the public, without either my consent or my knowledge [nor do we know]. But it concerns me little if I shall be considered incompetent to write; and it concerns Epictetus not at all if any man shall despise his words, for at the time when he uttered them it was plain that he had no other purpose than to move the minds of his hearers to the best things. If indeed these *Discourses* should produce this effect, they will have I think the result which the words of philosophers ought to have; but if they shall not, let those who read them know that, when Epictetus delivered them, the hearer could not avoid being affected in the way that Epictetus wished him to be.

This statement by Arrian is politely deprecative of his own ability as a reporter of Epictetus' teaching, and perhaps obscures an actual public intent in the preparation. At any rate, the *Discourses* deserved and received the most favorable attention. In the way of practical moral-religious instruction nothing finer has come down to us from the ancient philosophers and teachers of the Greco-Roman world. Epictetus upholds a high moral ideal, with great piety; he sets forth the principles of goodness, with impressive injunctions to right living. For example,

When you are going in to any great personage, remember that Another also from above sees what is going on, and that you ought to please Him rather than the other.

Remember never to say that you are alone, for you are not, but God is within. . . . To this God you ought to swear an oath just as the soldiers do to Caesar. . . . Never to be disobedient, never to make any charges, never to find fault with anything that He has given, and never unwillingly to do or to suffer anything that is necessary.

We must make the best use we can of the things which are in our power.

He is free to whom everything happens in accordance with His [God's] will.

This is your duty, to act well the part that is given to you; but to select the part belongs to Another.

Because the gods have given the wine or wheat, we sacrifice to them: but because they have produced in the human mind that fruit by which they

designed to show us the truth which relates to happiness, shall we not thank God for this?

When you have decided that a thing ought to be done and are doing it, never avoid being seen doing it, though the many shall form an unfavorable opinion about it. For if it is not right to do it, avoid doing the thing; but if it is right, why are you afraid of those who shall find fault wrongly?

Seek not that the things which happen should happen as you wish; but wish the things which happen to be as they are, and you will have a tranquil flow of life.

You must know that if your companion be impure, he also who keeps company with him must become impure.

If I can acquire money and also keep myself modest and faithful and magnanimous, point out the way and I will acquire it.

Nothing is meaner than love of pleasure and love of gain and pride. Nothing is superior to magnanimity and gentleness and love of mankind and beneficence.

No man is free who is not master of himself.

Think of God more frequently than you breathe.

He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for those which he has.

Arrian has included in the *Discourses* and the *Encheiridion* no biographical data of Epictetus, and has furnished no introductions or settings to the sayings. The teaching is arranged topically in chapters. The form is gnomic rather than argumentative. The style is that of the diatribe, or discussion, which was the popular method of the practical philosophers in the first century A.D. As we have seen, this is the title actually given them, *Διατριβαι*. In this manner of address there is but one speaker, yet questions are raised and answered as in a colloquy. Arrian's writings are practically the equivalent of so much material from Epictetus' own hand, like the moral treatises of Seneca and Plutarch; we may well wish that the non-extant portion of the *Discourses* (four additional books) might have been preserved.

The teaching of Epictetus which we have through Arrian is in quantity more than twice the entire contents of all four Gospels. How much more certainly and definitely we should know Jesus and his message if some competent follower had taken down into writing directly from Jesus' lips such a full and exact record of what he said! A full first-hand account of what he taught would distinctly advance our historical knowledge of him.

The second Greek biography of which some account is here to be given is the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, written by Philostratus *ca. 217 A.D.*

Apollonius was an eminent Greek philosopher and teacher of the first century A.D. (*ca. 10-97 A.D.*),¹ contemporary with Jesus and Paul. He was widely known and highly revered throughout the Mediterranean world, for he made extended journeys and sojourns in all parts of it—in Asia Minor, Greece, Rome, Spain, Egypt, and Syria. He was an itinerant teacher of practical morality and religion. Born early in the century, he lived almost to its close, having relations with Nero, Vespasian, Domitian, and Nerva. Palestine he did not visit, nor does he seem to have come into any acquaintance or relationship with Jesus, with Paul, nor with the Christian movement in any way. This was of course in accordance with the custom of the Greek and Roman philosophers of the first century A.D., none of whom showed any interest in or appreciation of the oriental, popular, ecstatic, idealistic, religious movement which was then spreading westward from Palestine. Christianity was ignored by Apollonius, Seneca, Epictetus, and Plutarch, as well as by the historians of the period, Tacitus and Josephus.

Like Socrates, Jesus, and Epictetus, Apollonius of Tyana did not put his teaching into written form.² He taught much and continuously, but in the way of conversation and informal public address. He was always going about conversing with people, somewhat as Socrates and Jesus did. But he did not use the dialectical method of Socrates, nor did he have a speculative mind that was always reaching into metaphysics and definition. As compared with Jesus, his style and method were gentile-philosophical rather than Jewish-prophetic. Instead of the intense religious ardor, the apocalyptic vision, and the martyr zeal of Jesus, Apollonius was

¹ Philostratus says (Book VIII, chap. xxix): "Neither has Damis told us anything about the age of our hero; but there are some who say that he was eighty, others that he was over ninety, others again who say that his age far exceeded a hundred." Cf. Book I, chap. xiv: "when he reached the age of a hundred."

² He is said, however, to have written four books upon divination by the stars, and still another book on the ritual worship of sacrifice. Neither work is extant. See Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, Book III, chap. xli.

mild, patient, and philosophical in his view of life, with a large sense of humor. He enjoyed travel and learned from it. He had a universal interest and sympathy. He lived through a long life of earnest, kindly, and efficient teaching, winning wide renown, and persecuted only by the vicious emperors. It happens that to us in the twentieth century Apollonius is little known, while his contemporaries Seneca, Epictetus, and Plutarch are better known; but it is probable that in the first century Apollonius was more widely known and more influential than they among the people as a whole, because Seneca and Plutarch were writers rather than oral teachers, and Epictetus taught privately rather than publicly. That we have their writings and teachings so fully, and that scholars have given and now give them so much attention, explains in fact our greater familiarity with them than with Apollonius, about whom we have only indirect information and whose teaching is preserved only in fragmentary form.¹

Apollonius was an earnest Pythagorean in his teaching and manner of life. He abstained from marriage, wine, and meat, from leather shoes, woolen garments, and shaving. At fourteen years of age he had become an apprentice to philosophy, first at Tarsus and then at Aegae. Neither the Stoic teacher at the former city, nor the Peripatetic teachers at the latter, impressed him so much as Euxenus, the follower of Pythagoras. As an attendant at the Temple of Asclepius in Aegae he acquired the gift of miraculous healing, and became renowned for his character and his deeds. "He turned the Temple into a Lyceum and Academy, for it resounded with all sorts of philosophical discussions." Some years later, in his young manhood, he returned to his home town Tyana. Soon his father and mother died, and the half share of their property which fell to him he divided among his brother and poor relations,

¹ Until two years ago the only English translation of Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* was Berwick's, made in 1811. In 1912 a new English translation by F. C. Conybeare, together with the Greek text, was published in the "Loeb Classical Library" (New York: Macmillan, 2 vols., \$3). This makes the work available, and it will doubtless become better known. The *Life* contains not a little that is romantic in its descriptions of the adventures of Apollonius on his journeys through many countries, and much miracle as regards Apollonius' own life and deeds. But in the main it is to be regarded as a historical account.

preferring poverty for his own lot. Thereupon he began his journeys and sojourns in many lands, extending over many years.

For five years, in Asia Minor, he kept a vow of absolute silence, designed to increase and establish his wisdom. Then he entered upon his life-long career as an itinerant teacher of Greek practical philosophy, pursuing this calling wherever he went and with all he met, "the occasions providing as usual the topics he talked about." He visited Persia and India, and made long sojourns in Egypt. Finally, in 79 A.D., when Titus became emperor, he summoned Apollonius to a conference with him at Tarsus, to gain wisdom from him for his reign. The Tarsians during his stay there "became such devoted admirers of our hero as to regard him as their second founder and the mainstay of their city." Again he journeyed in Egypt, Phoenicia, Cilicia, Ionia, Achaia, and Italy. He criticized the imperial rule of Domitian, as he had that of Nero, and was summoned from Asia to Rome to clear himself of a charge of rebellion; but after being held for a time in prison, his trial ended in release. Then he continued teaching in Greece, and later at Smyrna and at Ephesus, where he died *ca.* 97 A.D., being unable to accept the invitation of the emperor Nerva to become his adviser at Rome.

Our knowledge of Apollonius rests back upon a full account of him written in the first century A.D. while he was active in his philosophical ministry. A man by the name of Damis entered into close association with Apollonius early in his itinerant career and remained with him in his travels as an attending disciple until his death; the relationship continued through forty or fifty years. Damis kept a journal of Apollonius' journeys, experiences, deeds, and words during all this period. The journal has not come down to us intact, but the extensive Life by Philostratus is made up chiefly from Damis' material. Presumably it was because the journal was so fully taken up into the Life that the journal itself was allowed to disappear.

Philostratus, the ultimate biographer of Apollonius of Tyana, was a Greek rhetorician at Rome who flourished in the first half of the third century A.D. (his date was *ca.* 127-245 A.D.). As a

young man he had studied rhetoric and philosophy at Athens, and later at Rome. He produced several works, the most important of which was his *Bίοι Σοφιστῶν*, *Lives of the Sophists*. These Lives "are not in the true sense biographical, but rather picturesque impressions." They belong to the type of popular biography in the period, a eulogistic and didactic method of writing about famous teachers, of which Plutarch's *Lives* and Diogenes Laertius' *Lives and Opinions of the Ancient Philosophers* are the best examples. The *Life of Apollonius* by Philostratus belongs to this class, but is much more extensive than any of the other biographies, a characteristic due, we may suppose, to the greater amount of material at hand and to its extraordinary attractiveness.

Philostratus produced his Τὰ ἐς τὸν Τύανα Ἀπολλώνιον at the suggestion of Julia Domna, the wife of the Roman emperor Septimius Severus, early in the third century A.D. As she died in 217 A.D., and the work was not published until after her death, that year may be named as the approximate date of its issue. Julia Domna, the empress, had been originally a Syrian priestess, and through her influence oriental religious rites had been made fashionable at Rome. She was greatly interested in the earlier accounts of Apollonius by Damis, Moiragene, and Maximus, in which she found the eminent man described as a mystic, a magian, and a miracle-worker, as well as a Pythagorean philosopher and a teacher of practical ethics and religion. She therefore furnished all these materials, together with letters of Apollonius, and asked Philostratus to produce from them a worthy biography of him.¹ Such a rewriting was desirable because: (1) the sources being various, a unified account was needed; (2) Damis' journal, the main source, was in poor Greek style; (3) the reputation of Apollonius having been attacked, it was right that the public should be able to know him as he was. "It seems to me then that I ought not to condone or acquiesce in the general ignorance, but write a true account of the man, detailing the exact times at which he said or did this or that, as also the habits and temper of wisdom by means of which he came near to being considered a supernatural and divine being." Philostratus was well qualified to make over

¹ Conybeare's edition of Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, Book I, chaps. ii, iii.

these sources into a Life of Apollonius which for content, arrangement, style, and spirit constituted the work a classic.

The process by which Philostratus compiled the Life out of the oral and written information at his command he himself describes:

I have gathered my information partly from the many cities where he was loved, and partly from the temples whose long-neglected and decayed rites he restored, and partly from the accounts left of him by others, and partly from his own letters . . . [which] dealt with the subjects of the gods, of customs, of moral principles, of laws, and in all these departments he corrected the errors into which men had fallen.¹

There was a man Damis, by no means stupid, who formerly dwelt in the ancient city of Nineveh. He resorted to Apollonius in order to study wisdom, and having shared, by his own account, his wanderings abroad, wrote an account of them. And he records his [i.e., Apollonius'] opinions and discourses and all his prophecies . . . [he] told his story clearly enough, yet somewhat awkwardly.

And I also read² the book of Maximus of Aegae, which comprised all the life of Apollonius in Aegae.

And furthermore a will was composed by Apollonius, from which one can learn how rapturous and inspired a sage he really was.

For we must not pay attention anyhow to Moiragenes, who composed four books about Apollonius, and yet was ignorant of many of the circumstances of his life.

That then I combined these scattered sources together, and took trouble over my composition, I have said; but let my work, I pray, redound to the honor of the man who is the subject of my compilation (*συγγέναται*), and also be of use to those who love learning.³

Damis, a native of Nineveh, joined him as a pupil . . . who became the companion of his wanderings abroad and his fellow-traveler and associate in all wisdom, and who has preserved to us many particulars of the sage. He admired him, and having a taste for the road, said: "Let us depart, Apollonius, you following God, and I you." . . . He stayed with him, increasing in wisdom, and committing to memory whatever he learned. This Assyrian's [Greek] language, however, was of a mediocre quality, for he had not the gift of expressing himself, having been educated among the barbarians [i.e., non-Greeks]; but he kept a journal (*δατριβή*) of their intercourse, and recorded in it whatever he heard or saw, and he was very well able to put

¹ The letters of Apollonius here referred to accompany the Life in the Conybeare edition, Vol. II, pp. 408-81. The letters, however, are brief and somewhat disappointing. They do not compare well with the letters of Paul in the New Testament.

² In fact, used; see Book I, chap. xii.

³ *Op. cit.*, Book I, chaps. ii, iii.

together a memoir (*ὑπόμνημα*) of such matters, and managed this better than anyone else could do. At any rate the volume which he calls his scrap-book (*ἥ δέλτος ἡ τῶν ἐκφαντισμάτων*) was intended to serve such a purpose by Damis, who was determined that nothing about Apollonius should be passed over in silence.¹

For the sake of accuracy and truth, and in order to leave out nothing of the things that Damis wrote, I should have liked to relate all the incidents that occurred on their journey through these barbarous regions [Mesopotamia]; but my subject hurries me on to greater and more remarkable episodes.²

The memoirs (*τὰ ἀναγεγραμμένα*) then of Apollonius of Tyana, which Damis the Assyrian composed, end with the above story.³

It therefore appears that Damis' journal was the main source of Philostratus' work, furnishing almost the whole of the massive narrative from Book I, chap. xviii, when at the age of about 30 years he set out on his travels into the Far East, to Book VIII, chap. xxviii, which recounts his death. The closing pages of the biography contain material which Philostratus had obtained from oral report. His account of Apollonius' parentage, birthplace, birth, early education, his years at Aegae, and his adoption of the Pythagorean philosophy and manner of life was derived in part from his own investigations⁴ and in part from the document of Maximus of Aegae.⁵

These sources of Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, and the way in which he used them, may be compared with the sources and compilation of the New Testament Gospels. Philostratus had: (1) Damis' journal covering the main fifty years of Apollonius' public career; (2) Moiragenes' work of "four books about Apollonius"; (3) the writing of Maximus recounting Apollonius' young manhood years at Aegae; (4) oral tradition regarding his birth, early years, and death. The work by Moiragenes was hostile to Apollonius, and "ignorant of many of the circumstances of his life," so that Philostratus says he disregarded it.⁶ The sketch by Maximus accounted for but a short early period in his life. The

¹ *Op. cit.*, Book I, chap. xix.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, Book I, chap. ii.

² *Op. cit.*, Book I, chap. xx.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, Book I, chaps. iii, xii.

³ *Op. cit.*, Book VIII, chap. xxix.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, Book I, chap. iii.

oral tradition supplied but a small amount of information. Damis' journal was the chief source; from it nineteen-twentieths of Philostratus' biography were drawn. He did not use all that the writing by Damis furnished, but he perhaps used the greater portion of it; what he omitted was unimportant.¹ This material was first-hand and immediate, for Damis in company with Apollonius wrote down the events, deeds, and words from day to day as they happened. Philostratus was unable to subject Damis' narrative to a historical investigation, nor does he seem to have used criticism regarding it farther than to recognize that in some parts it was a "wonder-tale." He did have to revise or rewrite the narrative into good literary Greek. The process of compilation was to put together in a single story, chronologically arranged, the available information about Apollonius; this Philostratus did in an able, attractive manner. As Damis' journal had been written in Apollonius' lifetime (presumably also the sketch by Maximus), the interval of about 120 years between the death of Apollonius and Philostratus' biography of him did not much affect the trustworthiness of the main information concerning him.

Obviously the correspondence between Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* and the Gospels as Lives of Jesus is only general and limited. They were similar in that: (1) the purpose in each case was a practical one, to promote morality and religion by eulogizing and commanding the great teacher in his message and in his example; (2) the method common to each was to recount the life in a general chronological arrangement from humble birth to death and glorification; (3) the deeds and the words were intermingled in a narrative that consisted mainly in a chain of anecdotes; (4) the story in each case was full of miracle—divine person, miraculous birth, healing miracles, supernatural knowledge and foretelling, resurrection and ascension; (5) the biography in each case was written by one who was not an immediate disciple and observer of the hero, and who wrote a generation or more after his death; (6) the information was obtained partly from oral tradition, but chiefly from written memorabilia; (7) the traditional story was retold without much historical investigation or criticism, using the

¹ *Op. cit.*, Book I, chap. xx.

material at hand almost as it was; (8) the Greek style of the sources was reworked more or less, to give the writing higher quality, acceptability, and usefulness.

On the other hand, the *Life of Apollonius* and the Gospels are dissimilar in the following respects: (1) the ultimate accounts of Jesus were four instead of one; (2) the Evangelists selected and interwove material from parallel memorabilia of Jesus' life, whereas Philostratus did little more than conjoin narratives of the several portions of Apollonius' life; (3) the Gospels were propagandist documents of an oriental religious movement invading the Occident, while Apollonius was proclaiming a well-known and established Greek philosophy; (4) the Gospels carried an elaborate, intense, theological doctrine of Christ, salvation, and the new age, in addition to their moral idealism and appeal; (5) the geographical area of the Gospels was the small country of Palestine, while Apollonius' travels and ministry covered almost the entire ancient world; (6) the Gospel story arose in Aramaic, and had afterward to be translated into Greek; (7) the early transmission of the memorabilia of Jesus was altogether oral—there were no immediate written accounts of what Jesus did and said; (8) the memorabilia of Jesus, oral and written, were used continuously for evangelistic and apologetic purposes, undergoing selection, adaptation, expansion, and supplementation to meet the needs of the Christian mission; (9) the Gospel of Mark, late, composite, theological, and pragmatic, corresponded closely to no document that Philostratus used; (10) the hypothetical document Q, or the written sources from which the common non-Markan discourse material of Matthew and Luke was derived, was not specifically like any source of the *Life of Apollonius*; (11) there was nothing corresponding to the Gospel of John among Philostratus' documents.

Some idea of Philostratus' biography of Apollonius of Tyana can be obtained from the following quotations:

He found [at Aegae] a peace congenial to one who would be a philosopher, and a more serious school of study and a temple of Asclepius, where that god reveals himself in person to men. There he had as his companions in philosophy followers of Plato and Chrysippus and Peripatetic philosophers. And he diligently attended also to the discourses of Epicurus, for he did not despise

these either, although it was to those of Pythagoras that he applied himself with unspeakable wisdom and ardor.¹

Since they [the gods] know everything, it appears to me that a person who comes to the house of God and has a good conscience should put up the following prayer: "O ye gods, grant unto me that which I deserve. For the holy, O Priest, surely deserve to receive blessings, and the wicked the contrary. Therefore the gods, as they are beneficent, if they find anyone who is healthy and whole and unscarred by vice, will send him away surely after crowning him, not with gold crowns, but with all sorts of blessings; but if they find a man branded with sin and utterly corrupt, they will hand him over and leave him to justice, after inflicting their wrath upon him all the more, because he dared to invade their temples without being pure."²

[Apollonius rebuked Euphrates] for doing everything for money, and tried to wean him of his love of filthy lucre and of huckstering his wisdom.³

He said that it was the duty of philosophers of his school to hold converse at the earliest dawn with the gods, but as the day advanced, about the gods; and during the rest of the day to discuss human affairs in friendly intercourse.⁴

When he conversed he would assume an oracular manner and use the expressions "I know," "You must know." And his sentences were short and crisp, and his words were telling and closely fitted to the things he spoke of, and his words had a ring about them as of the dooms delivered by a sceptered king. And when a certain quibbler asked him why he asked no questions of him, he replied: "Because I asked questions when I was a stripling; and it is not my business to ask questions now, but to teach people what I have discovered." This was the line he pursued in Antioch, and he converted to himself the most unrefined people.⁵

As they fared into Mesopotamia, the tax-gatherer who presided over the bridge led them into the registry and asked them what they were taking out of the country with them. And Apollonius replied: "I am taking with me temperance, justice, virtue, continence, valor, discipline." And in this way he strung together a number of feminine nouns or names. The other, already scenting his own perquisites, said: "You must then write down in the register these female slaves." Apollonius answered: "Impossible, for they are not female slaves that I am taking out with me, but ladies of quality."⁶

¹ *Op. cit.*, Book I, chap. vii.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, Book I, chap. xvi.

² *Op. cit.*, Book I, chap. xi.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, Book I, chap. xvii.

³ *Op. cit.*, Book I, chap. xiii.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, Book I, chap. xx.

If I am housed above my rank, I shall live ill at ease; for superfluity distresses wise men more than deficiency distresses you [the King of Babylon].¹

He offered to the gods the following prayer: "O ye gods, grant unto me to have little and to want nothing."²

Chastity consists in not yielding to passion when the longing and impulse is felt, and in the abstinence which rises superior to this form of madness.³

You perhaps imagine that it is a lesser thing to go wrong in Babylon than to go wrong at Athens. . . . You do not reflect that a wise man finds Hellas everywhere, and that a sage will not regard or consider any place to be a desert or barbarous, because *he* at any rate lives under the eyes of Virtue; and although he sees only a few men, yet he is himself looked at by myriad eyes.⁴

He also said that it was a mistake to go to war even over large issues.⁵

Those who drink water, as I do, see things as they really are; they are never found to be giddy, nor full of drowsiness, or of silliness, nor unduly elated; but they are wide awake and thoroughly rational, and always the same. . . . You find them free and erect, and they go to bed with a clear, pure soul and welcome sleep, and are neither buoyed up by the bubbles of their own private luck, nor scared by any adversity; for the soul meets both alternatives with equal calm, if it be sober.⁶

[He] urged them to take pride rather in themselves than in the beauty of their city. . . . It was more pleasing for the city to be crowned with men than with porticos and pictures.⁷

[He enjoined] mutual rivalry between men in behalf of the common weal. . . . To me it seems best that each man should do what he understands best and what he best can do. For that city will recline in peace, nay, will rather stand up erect, where one man is admired for his popular influence, and another for his wisdom, and another for his liberal expenditure on public objects, and another for his kindliness, and another for his severity and unbending sternness towards malefactors, and another because his hands are pure beyond suspicion. And as he was thus discoursing [at Smyrna], he saw a ship with three sails leaving the harbor, of which the sailors were each discharging their particular duties in working it out to sea. Accordingly by way of reforming his audience he said: Now look at that ship's crew, how some of them being rowers have

¹ *Op. cit.*, Book I, chap. xxxiii.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, Book I, chap. xxxvii.

² *Op. cit.*, Book I, chap. xxxiii.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, Book II, chap. xxxvi.

³ *Op. cit.*, Book I, chap. xxxiii.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, Book IV, chap. vii.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, Book I, chap. xxxiv.

embarked in the tug-boats, while others are winding up and making fast the anchors, and others again are spreading the sails to the wind, and others are keeping an outlook at bow and stern. Now if a single member of this community abandoned any one of his particular tasks or went about his naval duties in an inexperienced manner, they would have a bad voyage and would themselves impersonate the storm; but if they vie with one another and are rivals only with the object of one showing himself as good a man as the other, then their ship will make the best of havens, and all their voyage be one of fair weather and fair sailing.¹

It happened also that a young man was building a house in Rhodes who was a *nouveau riche* without any education, and he collected in his house rare pictures and gems from different countries. Apollonius then asked him how much money he had spent on teachers and on education. "Not a drachma," he replied. "And how much upon your house?" "Twelve talents, and I mean to spend as much again upon it." "And what is the good of your house to you?" "Why, as a residence it is splendidly suited to my needs." "And," said Apollonius, "are men to be valued more for themselves or for their belongings?" "For their wealth," said the young man, "because wealth has the most influence." "My good boy," [said Apollonius] "it seems to me that it is not you that own the house, but the house that owns you."²

[Apollonius addressing the newly made emperor Vespasian], "For myself I care little about constitutions, seeing that my life is governed by the gods; but I do not like to see the human flock perish for want of a shepherd at once just and moderate. . . . The government of one man, if it provides all round for the welfare of the community, is popular government."³

What a splendid thing it would be, if wealth were held in less honor, and equality flourished a little more, for then all men would agree with one another, and the whole earth would be like one brotherhood.⁴

I have studied profoundly the problem of the rise of the art [philosophy], and whence it draws its first principles; and I have realized that it belongs to men of transcendent religious gifts, who have thoroughly investigated the nature of the soul, the well-springs of whose existence lie back in the immortal and in the unbegotten.⁵

Now the inhabitants of Tarsus had previously detested Apollonius, because of the violent reproaches he addressed to them, owing to the fact that through their languid indifference and sensual indolence they could not put up with

¹ *Op. cit.*, Book IV, chaps. viii, ix.

² *Op. cit.*, Book V, chap. xxii.

³ *Op. cit.*, Book V, chap. xxxv.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, Book VI, chap. ii.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, Book VI, chap. xi.

the vigor of his remarks. But on this occasion they became such devoted admirers of our hero as to regard him as their second founder and the mainstay of their city.¹

The counts of the indictment [which Domitian brought against Apollonius] are as varied as they are numerous; for your style of dress is assailed in them, and your way of living in general, and your having been worshiped by certain people, and the fact that in Ephesus once you delivered an oracle about the famine; and also that you have uttered certain sentiments to the detriment of the sovereign—some of them openly, some of them obscurely and privately, and some of them on the pretence that you learned them from heaven.²

There is between man and God a certain kinship which enables him alone of the animal creation to recognize the gods, and to speculate both about his own nature and the manner in which it participates in the divine substance. Accordingly man declares that his very form resembles God, as it is interpreted by sculptors and painters; and he is persuaded that his virtues come to him from God, and that those who are endowed with such virtues are near to God and divine (*θείους*).³

If anyone converses with a Pythagorean, and asks what boons and how many he shall derive from him, I should myself answer as follows: He will acquire legislative science, geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, knowledge of harmony and of music, and of the physician's art, godlike divination in all its branches; and the still better qualities of magnanimity, greatness of soul, magnificence, constancy, reverence, knowledge and not mere opinion of the gods, direct cognizance of demons and not mere faith, friendship with both, independence of spirit, assiduity, frugality, limitation of his needs, quickness of perception, quickness of movement, quickness in breathing, excellence of color, health, courage, immortality.⁴

It is a noble thing to regard the whole earth as your country, and all men as your brethren and friends, seeing that they are the family of God (*γένος θεοῦ*), that they are of one nature, and that there is a communion of each and all in speech, and likewise in feelings, which is the same no matter how or when a man has been born, whether he is barbarian or whether he is Greek, so long as he is man (*ἄνθρωπος*).⁵

Quotation has been made at some length because the *Life of Apollonius* is not entirely familiar. These selections represent the

¹ *Op. cit.*, Book VI, chap. xxxiv.

² *Op. cit.*, Book VII, chap. xx.

³ *Op. cit.*, Book VIII, chap. vii.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, Epistle lii.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, Epistle xliv.

best that the Life and Letters contain in the way of moral-religious teaching. The whole amount of such teaching is considerable—perhaps a tenth part of the material, scattered throughout Books I–VI which contain the bulky narrative of his travels, and Books VII–VIII which recount extensively his relations with the emperor Domitian, his arrest, imprisonment, trial, defense, and ultimate release, shortly followed by his death at Ephesus.

Historical criticism of course regards as legendary all the supernatural elements in the story of Apollonius' life—the miracles of his birth and death, of his healings and other deeds, of his superhuman knowledge and foretellings, and the ascriptions of divine personality. It also treats as fanciful much of the detail in the travel narratives, as Philostratus himself did. The adventures of Apollonius were recounted somewhat after the model of the *Odyssey* and other epics of the classical literature. The geographical writers of the period, like Strabo in the first century B.C., were fond of including similar romancing stories of travelers in foreign lands. Such was in part the favorite fiction of the day.

Apart from the miracles and the romance in the *Life of Apollonius*, there is no reason to doubt the general historical character of Philostratus' biography. We may certainly ascertain from it the career, teaching, and personality of this great itinerant philosopher, public teacher, traveler, and adviser of cities and emperors.

Unquestionably there is a kind of parallelism, intentional or unintentional, between the *Life of Apollonius* and the life of Jesus as given in the Gospels. The nature of this parallelism, as already indicated, marks these writings as belonging to the same type of literature, namely, popular biography. The Gospels too contain supernatural elements and memorabilia of Jesus' deeds and words which have been adapted to popular use in the gentile mission, which call for historical criticism. But neither in the Gospels is the presence of such elements to be regarded as prejudicial to the general trustworthiness of the narrative of Jesus' career and teaching.

About the year 300 A.D., Hierocles, the proconsul of Bithynia, published a work entitled *Λόγοι φιλαλήθεις πρὸς τοὺς Χριστιανούς*, in criticism of the beliefs and the credulity of the Christians. He

drew attention to the parallelisms between Apollonius and Jesus, and as a Greek and a non-Christian he spoke in greater praise of Apollonius. Hierocles was doubtless influenced by racial, pagan, and intellectual prejudice against Jesus, the Gospels, and the Christians. Eusebius, the great Christian historian and apologete of the fourth century A.D., soon published an extended rejoinder to Hierocles' attack,¹ in which he indignantly denied and repudiated all the miracles and the divinity ascribed to Apollonius, at the same time defending with equal spirit and vigor all the miracles and divinity ascribed to Jesus. This was a deadlock of polemics on both sides, the historical facts being left to fare for themselves. Eusebius wrote:

I am quite ready to accept all [recorded of Apollonius] that is probable and has an air of truth about it, even though such details may be somewhat exaggerated and highly-colored out of compliment to a good man. . . . I therefore do not mind the author telling us that Apollonius was of an ancient family and lineally descended from the first settlers; . . . and that when he was young he not only had the distinguished teachers mentioned, but, if he likes, I will allow that he became himself their teacher and master in learning. . . . All this and the like is merely human (*ἀνθρώπινα*), and in no way incongruous with philosophy or with truth, and I can therefore accept it, because I set a very high value upon candor and love of truth. Nevertheless to suppose that he was a being of superhuman nature, and then to contradict this supposition at a moment's warning,² and to forget it almost as soon as it is made—this I regard as reprehensible and as calculated to fasten a suspicion not only on the author, but yet more on the subject of his memoir.³

It was not obvious to a Christian of the fourth century A.D. that the same kind of rational criticism by which he rejected all miracle and divinity in the case of anyone but Jesus must inevitably be applied to the Gospel narratives themselves.

Eusebius did not take the view that the *Life of Apollonius* had been produced by Philostratus as a pagan counterwork to the Gospels. During the eighty years since its publication it had not been so regarded or used. "Hierocles, of all the writers who have ever attacked us, stands alone in selecting Apollonius, as he has

¹ This writing by Eusebius is given in the Greek, with an English translation, at the close of Conybeare's edition of Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, II, 484-605.

² Eusebius is unconscious of analogous phenomena in the Gospels.

³ *Op. cit.*, Treatise of Eusebius, chap. xii; see also chap. xxxix.

recently done, for the purposes of comparison and contrast with our Savior.”¹ It is not impossible that Philostratus was acquainted with the Gospels and was interested in the parallelisms between Apollonius and Jesus. It may be that the supernatural features of his biography were to some extent influenced, through tradition or through himself, by the wonderful stories of Jesus’ birth, miracle-working, superhuman knowledge and resurrection. But Philostratus has shown² that he took up the preparation of the *Life of Apollonius* only at the request of the empress Julia Domna, whose attention in turn had been directed to the subject by “a certain kinsman of Damis” who in the first century A.D. had written the biographical journal of Apollonius. Neither Philostratus nor the empress seems to have had a specific intent or interest against the Christians and the Gospels.

The *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, in the English translation of the eight Books, contains 488 pages, about 136,000 words. This biography therefore is thirty-five times the length of the Gospel of Mark, and twice the length of all four Gospels together. That Philostratus could produce so full an account was of course due to the devotion and industry of Damis, the companion of Apollonius for fifty years and the immediate recorder of his deeds and utterances. Neither Jesus nor Paul had the advantage of such a biographer, and we are the poorer for that reason. But what Jesus’ and Paul’s disciples lacked as transcribers of their masters’ lives they outweighed by active, faithful promotion of their mission. The gospel message of Jesus and Paul, proclaimed and established in the Greco-Roman world, threw obscurity over the life and teaching of Apollonius.

¹ *Op. cit.*, Treatise of Eusebius, chap. i.

² *Op. cit.*, Book I, chap. iii.

[To be concluded in April]